

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 039732

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O 190104Z FEB 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 039732

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, SA, JO, SY, US

SUBJECT: CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS ON SAUDI LETTERS OF OFFER

1. WE RECENTLY SUBMITTED A NUMBER OF FMS LETTERS OF OFFER TO CONGRESS FOR SUPPLY OF EQUIPMENT (M60 TANKS, M113 APC'S, ETC.) TO MECHANIZE TWO SAUDI INFANTRY BRIGADES. CONGRESSMAN FASCELL'S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON POLITICO-MILITARY AFFAIRS HAS SCHEDULED FEB24 HEARINGS ON A RESOLUTION BY CONGRESSMAN ROSENTHAL TO DISAPPROVE SOME OR ALL OF THOSE SALES. ASST. SEC. ATHERTON PLANS TO APPEAR AS DEPARTMENT WITNESS.

2. WE EXPECT THAT QUESTIONING ON LETTERS OF OFFER WILL FOCUS, AMONG OTHER THINGS, ON SAUDI BRIGADES IN JORDAN
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PAGE 02 STATE 039732

AND SYRIA, AND ON RECENT SAUDI CONDUCT OF EXERCISES THERE.

ALTHOUGH PRESENT LAW DOES NOT EXPRESSLY FORBID STATIONING OF UNITS WITH FMS-SUPPLIED EQUIPMENT ON FOREIGN SOIL, SYRIAN AND JORDANIAN STATIONING OF SAUDI FORCES DOES RAISE DIFFICULT QUESTION OF SAUDI INTENTIONS VIS-A-VIS FUTURE MILITARY COOPERATION WITH CONFRONTATION STATES.

3. WOULD APPRECIATE ANYTHING ADDRESSEES CAN SUPPLY ON CURRENT LOCATION, STRENGTH, AND COMMAND CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS FOR SAUDI FORCES IN SYRIA AND JORDAN; QUESTION OF

WHETHER SAUDIS HAVE ENGAGED IN JOINT PLANNING WITH MILITARY AUTHORITIES THERE; POSSIBILITY THAT THEY HAVE BEEN GIVEN SPECIFIC SECTORS FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES, OR SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR POSSIBLE OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS; AND ANY GENERAL COMMENT ON INTERFACE AND ROLE OF SAUDI FORCES IN SYRIA AND JORDAN.

4. FOR JIDDA: WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE YOUR ESTIMATE OF WHICH TWO BRIGADES SAUDIS INTEND MECHANIZE WITH U.S. EQUIPMENT IF LETTERS OF OFFER ARE APPROVED. DOD TEAM WHICH VISITED SAUDI ARABIA IN JANUARY ESTIMATES THAT BRIGADES NOW BASED ON KHAMIS MUSHAYT AND TABUK WOULD BE OBJECT OF U.S. MECHANIZATION, BUT THAT CONCLUSION BASED ON IMPRESSIONS RATHER THAN FACTS. SPECIFICALLY HAVE YOU SEEN ANY SIGN THAT THE SAUDIS INTEND TO BRING BACK ONE OR BOTH BRIGADES FROM JORDAN AND SYRIA FOR MECHANIZATION AND EVENTUAL RETURN? OR THAT SAUDIS INTEND MOVE BRIGADES NOW IN SAUDI ARABIA TO JORDAN AND SYRIA IN EXCHANGE FOR THOSE NOW THERE, ONCE MECHANIZATION PROCESS IS COMPLETE? WE RECOGNIZE THAT YOU MAY NOT HAVE MORE THAN INFORMED SPECULATION AT THIS TIME, AND THAT SAUDIS MAY NOT HAVE THOUGHT THIS FAR AHEAD THEMSELVES, BUT WOULD APPRECIATE ANY COMMENT YOU CAN OFFER.

5. REQUEST REPLIES BY FEBRUARY 21 AT THE LATEST.
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